



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration  
PROGRAM PLANNING AND INTEGRATION  
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

JAN 20 2006

Dear Reviewer:

In accordance with provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, we enclose for your review the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the State of Washington Final Forest Practices Habitat Conservation Plan (FPHCP), Volume I (Environmental Impact Statement) and Volume II (Response to Public Comments). You are receiving a CD copy of the FEIS, that also includes the Final FPHCP and associated documents. These documents are also available on the web at: <http://westernwashington.fws.gov/CONSPLAN/docs.html> (FEIS) and <http://www.dnr.wa.gov/hdocs/agency/federalassurances/> (Final FPHCP) and hard copies may be reviewed at most Washington State libraries. The Federal actions considered in these documents for the State of Washington are: (1) the issuance of Incidental Take Permits (ITP) by NOAA Fisheries and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (collectively the Services) under section 10 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and/or (2) NOAA Fisheries' issuance of a limit on the application of the prohibition against take under section 4(d) of the ESA and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's consideration of similar rulemaking under section 4(d).

These proposed Federal actions are in response to applications submitted by the Department of Natural Resources on behalf of the State of Washington. These applications include the current Washington Forest Practices Rules and serve as the foundation of the Final FPHCP. The Washington Forest Practices Board and the Department of Natural Resources are not proposing any state rule changes as part of these applications.

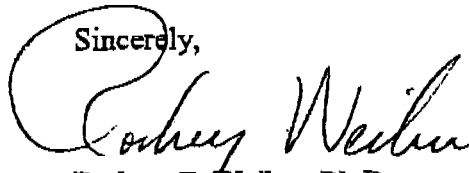
The proposed term of ITPs, issued by each of the Services, is 50 years. The ITPs would provide coverage for incidental take of covered species (ESA listed and unlisted) that may be taken incidentally to otherwise lawful forest practices activities regulated by the Washington Forest Practices Act, located primarily on non-Federal and non-tribal forestlands in Washington. The section 4(d) limit on the application of the prohibition against take would be only for those threatened species identified in the current NOAA Fisheries 4(d) rule (Limit 13) or to specific threatened species included in any new, relevant section 4(d) rules issued by NOAA Fisheries or the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The term of a section 4(d) limit would be indefinite, subject to periodic review.

The FPHCP includes the State's Forest Practices Rules and administrative program, including an adaptive management program. The FPHCP seeks to protect and restore habitat of covered species affected by forest road construction, use and maintenance, timber harvest, and most silvicultural activities conducted on non-Federal and non-tribal forestlands. The other alternatives considered in this FEIS include no action, the issuance of a section 4(d) limit on the application of the prohibition against take of certain threatened species only, and a more restrictive conservation plan for listed and covered species.



The Services are providing 30 days for public review of this FEIS and associated documents. Please submit written comments to Sally Butts, Project Manager, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 102, Lacey, Washington 98503-1263, telephone (360) 753-5832, facsimile (360) 753-9518 or to Laura Hamilton, Project Manager, National Marine Fisheries Service, 510 Desmond Drive SE, Suite 103, Lacey, Washington 98503-1273, telephone (360) 753-5820, facsimile (360) 753-9517. Comments must be received by the end of the 30-day comment period (February 27, 2006). Also please send a copy of your comments to the NOAA Office of Program Planning and Integration (PPI), SSMC3 Rm. 15603, 1315 East-West Hwy, Silver Spring, MD 20910; by fax at 301-713-0585; or by email to [nepa.comments@noaa.gov](mailto:nepa.comments@noaa.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rodney Weiher". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "Rodney" is written with a large, looping "R" that extends upwards and to the left. The last name "Weiher" is written in a more compact, cursive script.

Rodney F. Weiher, Ph.D.  
NOAA NEPA Coordinator

Enclosure